

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT HER MERCY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASHINGDEED," "A PERFECT TREASURE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXIX. IN NEED AND INDEED.

WHILE Evy was still pondering upon the terrible disclosure, which accident had thus revealed to her, there came a knock at the door, which not only startled her from her reflections, but accompanied as it was by the voice of one who had been the chief subject of them, had the effect of disturbing her conclusions. So long as she had been alone, she had weighed the whole matter with an impartiality that had astonished herself; but no sooner did she hear the voice of Judith, than all her old antipathy and repugnance to her seemed to return with tenfold force. She had been weighing her in the scale of justice, as a something apart from, and without any personal reference to herself; and now she suddenly awakened to the sense that this girl, on the other side of the panel, was to be her daily and only companion, perhaps for years. She had been making allowances for her, which had seemed reasonable enough, yet her very efforts to be just now appeared to have exhausted charity and patience alike, and to have made Judith's society intolerable.

"What is it?" answered she, with a strange reluctance even to address her by name.

"Mrs. Storcks has come, and wishes particularly to see you."

"Where is my uncle?"

"In his room."

Evy hesitated a moment. She felt very unequal to the task of conversing with any one, even with a friend like Mrs. Storcks. The idea of having once more to

repeat her tale of trouble, as it would be necessary to do, however briefly, and to have to listen to kindly but useless expressions of sympathy—"the vacant chaff well meant for grain"—or worse, as in Mr. De Coucy's case, to arguments in favour of what was now even more than ever out of the question, a reconciliation with Captain Heyton, positively appalled her. Yet it was certain that her uncle could still less endure such an interview; and was not this an opportunity to save him pain, and begin, as it were, that path of devotion to her unhappy benefactor which she had made up her mind to tread?

"Please to say that I will be with her directly." Evy felt that it was not civil of her to keep the door closed, and yet, at that moment, when she required all her calmness, she could not trust herself to meet Judith face to face. There was no reply; but, as though something more had been expected from her, Judith waited for a moment at the door, ere she turned to go down-stairs. She was annoyed, no doubt, and justly so; and with her retreating footsteps a feeling of contrition for her own coldness arose in Evy's heart; but also one of intense relief. She felt sorry, but yet more comfortable in her mind. Then she smoothed her hair, as all women do in preparation for an interview, whether with bridegroom at the altar, or executioner at the block—and went down into the drawing-room, where, as she expected, she found Mrs. Storcks alone. Judith had always avoided her, when it was possible for her to do so, as vinegar declines to mix with the oil that is sure to get the upper hand of it.

"Evy, dear, I have seen Mr. De Coucy, and know all," were the visitor's first words,

spoken with singular tenderness and affection. "I am not come to ask painful questions, nor to seek to change a resolution, the grounds of which ought to be better understood by yourself than any other person. The only excuse I have for intruding on your sorrow is, that I wish to be of use if I can."

There was a simplicity and earnestness in the widow's tone that took Evy's gentle heart by storm. She had always liked Mrs. Storks, but had scarcely given her credit for the depth of feeling which her handsome face as it bent down to kiss her cheek, and her arm as it clung in loving protection round her waist, now manifestly displayed. She not only felt grateful for it, as in Mr. De Coucy's case, but comforted exceedingly, for the sympathy of one of her own sex was what her heart had sorely yearned for.

"I take it for granted, my darling Evy," continued the widow, "that all that old gentleman has told me is true; that he has in no way exaggerated the calamity that has befallen you, but that your uncle's affairs are in as bad a state as they well can be."

"I am afraid they are," answered Evy, sighing. "What has happened to us is, I believe, no less than utter ruin."

"Still, I should like to be quite sure, dear, before making the proposition I have in my mind. In my country, some people are said to be ruined when they haven't a cent, and others when they have saved fifty thousand dollars out of the fire."

"My uncle has saved nothing, he tells me; what he may get from the furniture of the cottage"—and Evy could not help casting a forlorn glance around the pretty little drawing-room, almost every object in which had come from Dunwich, and reminded her of that happy home—"is absolutely all that he will have to look to."

"It ought to sell well," was the widow's rather unexpected reply. "That's a duck of a piano; and the carpet is a three-pile one—Kidderminster, don't you call it? It's a pity the sale can't take place at New York, instead of Balcombe."

Mrs. Storks was always abrupt in manner; but on the present occasion she turned out her sentences like wood from a chopping machine. A stranger would, under the circumstances, have pronounced her rude and unfeeling, but one who knew her well would have perceived that she was only nervous and embarrassed.

"I am afraid that all these pretty things

together won't realise very much," observed she, after a little pause.

"I am afraid not," returned Evy, quietly. "But it is no use repining at what can't be helped."

"Just so; and besides, we must remember, Evy, that pecuniary loss is not, after all, the greatest misfortune that can befall us."

"I have reason to know that," answered the girl, slowly. It was the first bitter speech that her sorrows had wrung from her, but, she could not refrain from uttering it. There is nothing so provoking to a wounded spirit as the platitudes which others would fain apply to heal it.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Evy," cried Mrs. Storks, reproachfully; "how could you have supposed I did? I was thinking of myself when I spoke of greater losses than that of money—oh, I don't allude to the general, my dear—for Evy had looked up at once with a sympathising glance—"though I was very sorry to part with him; time has healed that, as it heals everything, except the eyes."

"Except the eyes?" ejaculated the wondering Evy; "why the eyes?"

"Because the older we grow the weaker they get—you don't know, probably, my dear, how very weak and bad my eyes are getting."

"Indeed, I did not," said Evy, regarding the bright orbs of the widow with compassionate curiosity. "I should never have thought that yours were failing."

"But they are, my dear; they're failing fast. My doctor tells me, I mustn't use them a bit more than I can help; mustn't write nor read, but must look about to engage at once some sort of amanuensis and companion. Don't think me selfish, my dear girl, but directly I heard of the change in your circumstances, my first idea was, 'Why perhaps Evy Carthew will be persuaded to come and fill this very place, and how nice it would be if she would.'"

Evy looked up with a grave smile, and took the widow's hand in hers.

"No, dear friend," said she. "I do not think you selfish—certainly not that—nor, to be frank—in any danger of going blind. You would establish a sinecure in your household with the generous intention of inviting me to fill it."

"No, no, no," insisted the widow eagerly, though flushing at the discovery of her pious fraud, "it would not be a sinecure, I do assure you, although I may have made

my eyes out to be a little less serviceable than they really are. The fact is, I do want a companion; some nice lady-like young person—yes, that's the phrase, 'lady-like young person'—such as Evy Carthew, to make me feel less lonely and wake me up a bit. I've got a little house of my own which would be very pleasant to me, if I could persuade you to share it, whereas, as it is, I spend half the year in hotels, and such like, to avoid being bored to death by my own society. I should set you lots of things to do, I promise you; to put out the flowers, for instance, for I love flowers in my rooms, and servants have never any notion of arranging them, and to make the tea of a morning when I happen to be a little late; and—and——"

"And as many more onerous tasks as your imagination can suggest," interrupted Evy, with a smile more bright than she could have believed her lips could ever again have formed. This unexpected kindness and consideration fell on her heart as rain on the parched grass, which before seems dead. "No, my dear Mrs. Storks," answered she, gravely; "it is impossible for me to accept your generous offer. I appreciate it, believe me, to the full, and shall never, never forget it; but I cannot leave my uncle. For all that has made my life hitherto a happy one I have to thank him alone, and in the future I intend to do my best to render his misfortunes tolerable."

"I was afraid you would say that," said the widow, heaving a deep sigh. "I really don't see how I could get on with poor Mr. Hulet; I mean, that is, for a constancy; he does take such a deal of medicine."

Mrs. Storks looked so perplexed at this consideration that Evy could not repress a smile. "Indeed," said she, "since all these misfortunes have happened to us, I do believe that my dear uncle has never once sought relief in drugs or restoratives. He has locked them all away in a cupboard, as though the very sight of them was hateful to him. But still it is very certain that he cannot come to reside with you, dear friend, either as amanuensis or companion."

"You bear yourself like a true heroine, my darling," answered the other admiringly. "I always said that you had as much of real courage as that crocodile Judith has of impudence. How is she, by-the-bye, Evy?"

As she put the question, the widow's

tone changed suddenly to one of carelessness and contempt, but there was something of interest too in her listening face, and she waited for the reply.

"Judith is much as usual," answered Evy, evasively.

"Ah, not inconsolably depressed I dare say. That young woman's capabilities of enduring the misfortunes that happen to other people are doubtless very considerable. She has been enriched, I hear, by Mrs. Hulet's death; is that the case?"

"I believe so," said Evy, quietly.

"But she has not offered to help your uncle out of his difficulties, I conclude, and I am equally sure that he will never ask her to do so."

Evy bowed her head. She could not trust herself to say how utterly out of the question was either supposition.

"Well, well, my darling, such being the position of affairs, and my little offer of assistance having proved of no avail, there is nothing for me but to hand you this epistle;" she took from her pocket a sealed envelope, directed to Mr. Hulet, and held it out for her companion to take. "This concerns yourself, Evy, quite as much as your uncle, and comes from an honest and genuine friend of both."

But Evy drew back her hand; the idea that Mr. De Coney had made the widow the bearer of his benevolence in the shape of some pecuniary aid suddenly occurred to her, and called the colour into her pale cheeks.

"It isn't—it isn't money, Mrs. Storks, I hope."

"No, my darling, it is not money. The person who sends it is as well aware as myself that we have to do with a very proud and independent young lady, by whom nothing so reasonable as the offer of a banker's cheque would be tolerated for an instant. If you had been a more sensible girl we should have had no difficulty in the matter. As it is, my plan is foiled, and according to promise, I therefore bring Mrs. Hodlin Barmby's under your consideration."

"Has good Mrs. Barmby, then, been thinking, like yourself, of how she can be of use to us?" cried Evy, letting fall a grateful tear or two; "if our misfortune was less, we might almost welcome it, since it shows us such noble friends."

"Thinking of you! of course she has been thinking of you, and talking of you too, like every one else in Balcombe." The smile faded out of Evy's face, at those

careless words. If every one was talking of them, what must some of those who were not their friends have said about her uncle, and Mrs. Hulet's death. The widow perceived her change of colour, though she could not guess its cause; and added hastily: "But I must not detain you longer, Evy, since I am sure you must have enough to do and think about. Mrs. Barmby would herself have come, you may be sure, if it had not been for that consideration. She is a good sensible woman, such as one feels one could get on with if it were necessary to live with her for ever under the same roof—a conviction which is the great test of one's liking for a fellow-creature. As for living with Judith, for example, I for my part, couldn't have done it. You have the patience of an angel, Evy, but for my part I should have pitched her over the cliff—oh, dear, dear, what am I saying? Forgive me, my darling, I quite forgot. Well, you'll show that letter to Mr. Hulet at once, and when you have both made up your minds as to the answer, you will let her know. Remember me most kindly to your uncle, will you, and give my most earnest wishes to Judith, that—yes—that she may be as happy as she deserves."

For an instant the widow's handsome face lit up with a roguish smile, then melted into eager tenderness as she clasped Evy in her arms and bade her farewell.

Her mission had failed in its object, but it had not been useless, since it had left the sense of kindness, consideration, sympathy—of all in short that is best in friendship—behind it. For it is not the making use of friends that renders them a comfort to the unfortunate, but the knowledge that they possess them to make use of if they please.

CHAPTER XXX. "WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A GOD-BE-WITH-YOU."

MR. HULET received Evy's account of her interview with Mrs. Storks with mingled feelings; he was distressed that she had given up what promised to be a happy home, but he could not conceal from her his joy that she had refused it.

"Not but that it would have been better on the whole, Evy, that you should have left me," sighed he, "for then my troubles would have been the sooner over."

"The sooner over! How so, uncle?" she had asked with unfeigned surprise.

"Because, without you, my darling, I should die," was his calm reply; and to see his face and hear his tone, was to be-

lieve his words. It was, in truth, almost impossible to recognise the fretful, but by no means infirm invalid of ten days ago, in the broken, woe-worn old man, who looked, whenever his heavy eyes fell anywhere save on his niece, as though death was indeed beckoning to him. When he heard that there was a letter for him from Mrs. Hodlin Barmby, he only said, "indeed;" then fell back into the fit of melancholy musing from which his niece's coming had but half aroused him.

"Shall I read it to you, uncle?" asked Evy.

"No, no; I do not need that," was his strange rejoinder; "every word is burnt in on my brain."

"But, my dear uncle, you have not seen it," exclaimed Evy, her apprehensions once more excited for the old man's wits. "It is here in my hand unopened."

His eyes slowly wandered towards it, then to her; when the consciousness of her meaning seemed to flash upon him for the first time. "Yes, yes; from Mrs. Hodlin Barmby," he murmured. "Let us hear what the good lady has to say."

Evy drew her chair closer to his, and laid her hand upon his knee, to insure his attention as much as to express her love, then read as follows.

"Lucullus Mansion, Balcombe.

"MY DEAR MR. HULET,—My husband and myself have heard with great regret that a severe pecuniary misfortune has happened to you, in addition to that domestic one which has been such a source of sorrow to us all. He and I both know what it is to lose one's money, and may therefore claim to have some sympathy with you upon the matter, without offence; moreover we hope that you consider us as your sincere friends. This is all very stiff and formal, a circumstance which probably arises from my literary experience being so much confined to informing our would-be visitors that there is no room for them at the Mansion, but you must take it for granted that we feel all the kindness I may fail to express. I am a woman of business, and it is my way to come to the point. We want you and your dear niece to come and stay with us—to live with us—not as guests (for we know that that would be distressing to you), but quite in another sort of way. The fact is, my dear sir, that, though I wouldn't let my husband know it (who thinks I am Cocker himself) for fifty pounds, I have never made my accounts

exactly right, for a week together, ever since I have had the management of this establishment:

Multiplication is vexation,
Addition is as bad,
Each little bill does trouble me,
And practice drives me mad.

That last line is the truest part of the proverb, which, after all, I believe I have not quoted quite correctly. It is the practice—the continually having to work at those odious figures, which is intolerable to me; instead of making me perfect it makes me wretched. Now, dear Miss Evy, as I have happened to observe, is a first-rate arithmetician. I have asked her sometimes to check an account for me, and the way in which her eye has run up and down the columns, without even putting what you carry down on the right-hand so as not to forget it, always filled me with admiration. Then she always found out where the mistake was, which I never can do, for the oftener I go over the thing the more errors I make; just as when mending a hole in very delicate lace, I have known folks to make half a dozen new ones. Now my proposition is that dear Miss Evy should come to Lucullus Mansion—there's a nice sitting-room on the ground-floor next the garden, with a couple of bedrooms opening into it, which would just suit you two—and keep our accounts. It would not only be an immense satisfaction to me, and saving of wear and tear in the way of remorse, to see the item, 'Lucifers and Sundries,' in our expenditure sensibly diminished, but it would be a very considerable pecuniary saving. You would live, of course, as you have been wont to do, here—pray excuse me for mentioning these details, but use is second nature, and besides, it is so much better, I always think, that people should have a thorough mutual understanding upon business matters; none of that 'I leave it to you, ma'am,' as the cabman says to us ladies, and which always ends in our being cheated; and I would also pay Miss Evy a salary, not according to her personal merits, indeed, for it would take Mrs. Bullion to give that, but in proportion to the advantage I derive from her assistance. I write all this, my dear Mr. Hulet, upon the assumption that your pecuniary losses have been such as to render this suggestion worth your attention, and in case your dear niece may not have thought fit to accept an offer of another kind, which Mrs. Storks will make in the first instance. I

dare not say she would be so happy with me as with the excellent widow; but we will do our very best to make her thoroughly at home with us, and at home I don't think she would ever feel herself to be except with her uncle. Above all, do not fear that she will find it incompatible to keep accounts and also her position as a lady; for though I have not succeeded in the former, the degradation, if any, of course lies in the attempt to do so, and I have myself tried it these many years, without, as I hope and believe, losing that respect and consideration to which I was accustomed before I became a landlady. There is a piece of 'proper pride' for you, which will make dear Miss Evy smile; I hope it will, I am sure. To win her for a moment from her sorrows would be a pleasure to me; to be able to lighten them for the future is what, next to my husband's happiness, I may honestly say, I have most at heart. And now for a piece of private information. Captain Heyton——"

"I think Mrs. Barmby means this for your private ear, not mine," said Evy, quietly, and handing the letter over to her uncle. Taking her hand in his, and retaining it with a tender clasp, Mr. Hulet read on to himself:

"Captain Heyton has suddenly left us, and will certainly not return again; there is therefore no fear of your darling Evy being distressed by meeting with him, in case you may wish to exchange your quarters at the cottage during the sale (as you will probably do) for our roof at once. I had some talk with him, though not upon that subject, upon which I cannot think without tears of regret; and he told me, to my surprise, that it is not his intention to return to Dunwich. It seems he has made up his mind for the future to reside in town. His manner was forced, and distraught to a degree which, notwithstanding my knowledge of what had happened, was most surprising and inexplicable. I take it for granted, of course, that Miss Judith is no longer to be a resident with you; and have consequently not contemplated her in the above arrangements.

"With our united kindest regards to yourself, and my best love to dear Evy,

"I am your sincere friend,
"CATHERINE HODLIN BARMBY."

"There was no great secret to be told, after all, Evy," observed Mr. Hulet, slowly, as he folded up the epistle. "Well, what

do you think of our good friend Mrs. Barmby's offer?"

"It is a most kind and thoughtful one, dear uncle, and I am sure merits our best thanks," answered Evy, simply; the idea of Mr. Hulet living at Balcombe, the very place of all others where he would be most exposed to the breath of scandal, seemed so utterly impossible to herself, that she did not understand that he was seriously putting the question to her as to whether they should accept the offer or not.

"Yes, we ought to be thankful," continued Mr. Hulet, wistfully; "for though I would much have preferred to be the bread-winner for you, my darling, than that you should work for me—"

"Oh, that is not what I was thinking of, uncle dear," interrupted Evy; "indeed, the idea of doing something, however slight, for you, is the strongest recommendation in my eyes that the proposal possesses; Mrs. Barmby would, I am sure, be a most lenient taskmistress, and I have no doubt that I could please her, but—"

She stopped, and looked at her companion, who had once more apparently sunk into despondent musing, with pitiful eyes. How could she tell him what was her real objection?

"Captain Heyton has left Balcombe for London, where he has resolved to live in future," observed Mr. Hulet, slowly, and checking off each sentence on his fingers. "We shall be poorer, Evy dear, even than you imagine, and this offer of a home and an income, however small, is as opportune as it is unlooked for. It is the only plan that seems to admit of our living together, and I confess that in my selfish eyes that consideration is paramount. Then as to the account-keeping, that is just the sort of thing for which I am still fit, and you need never write a figure with your own pretty fingers unless you please."

"But uncle," reasoned Evy, driven to her wit's-end for an objection, and wondering beyond measure that the one in her own mind did not also strike her companion, "there is Judith; she is not a favourite with Mrs. Barmby, and—"

"I know, I know; but there will be no difficulty about that, Judith leaves us at once, for London."

"For London? But to whom is she going?"

"To Mrs. Bullion's. She had a general invitation from her, it seems, and she wrote yesterday to accept it. She will have her reply to-morrow, and if it is in the affirm-

ative she will start forthwith. Then we shall be alone, my darling."

Pained as Evy was at Mr. Hulet's evident determination to accept Mrs. Barmby's offer, the unexpected news of Judith's departure almost counterbalanced her distress. After all, it seemed they had nowhere else to go; nor the means of living anywhere else. If her uncle confined himself to their own apartments—very retired ones she remembered, though with a most cheerful outlook—and did not mix with the general company at the table d'hôte, he might possibly avoid hearing the ill-natured talk of which, for his sake, she stood in such fear. And as for herself, she would try not to mind what was said by anybody—but to attend to her duties whatever they might be, and help kind Mrs. Barmby as much as she could. Seeing, therefore, that her uncle had once more sunk into meditation, she made no further remonstrance about the matter.

At breakfast, the next morning (of which meal the two girls now partook alone) when the letters came, and one of them for Judith, Evy could hardly keep her eyes off her as she read it, seeking to gather the nature of its contents from her countenance. That it was from Mrs. Bullion, she felt sure; the question was, had that lady expressed willingness to receive her self-invited guest? Evy was not long kept in suspense.

"I am going to town, to Mrs. Bullion's," observed Judith, quietly, as she poured out her second cup of tea. "I suppose Mr. Hulet told you that it might be so."

"Yes," answered Evy, "he did hint at something of that sort." She scarcely knew what else to say. She could not affect sorrow at her companion's departure upon her own account, and still less on that of her uncle, who had absented himself from the common meals, as she could not but conclude, from sheer disinclination to meet her companion.

What an unhappy state of things it is when the time for separation comes, and it is impossible to say, "How I shall miss you," to one of our own blood or household! Nay, when our secret thought is, "Well, I trust, we two here part for good and all!"

"Yes," repeated Evy, since Judith remained silent; "uncle said you might be going. Do you make any long stay with Mrs. Bullion?"

"That is doubtful—it depends on circumstances. But one thing is certain, I

shall not return hither; nor to your uncle's roof again."

Judith's tone was harsh, so much so, that it seemed designed to provoke a question; but Evy took no notice. She was apprehensive that her companion wished to lead her into a discussion about her uncle, which she was resolved to avoid.

"And when are you thinking of leaving us, Judith?"

"This morning; at once," answered the other. "I ordered a fly from Balcombe to take me to the railway, expecting this note would come, and—hark, I think I hear its wheels!"

There was certainly some wheeled carriage coming slowly down the lane that led from the high road.

"What, have you then packed and all, Judith?"

"Yes, I am quite ready. I have even made my adieu to your uncle! There is nothing to be done save to wish you good-bye, Evy."

There was a little tremor in her voice; something of tenderness or pity, very alien to it, and which softened Evy towards her. They had lived six months together, under the same roof; and they were about to part, perhaps for ever.

"I wish you all happiness, Judith; and especially where it has been denied to me, as you may have guessed or heard."

Judith bowed assent. Evy was glad she did not speak; the breaking off of her engagement with her lover was a subject even more to be avoided with Judith than that of her uncle; and it was only because she felt assured that her companion knew of that matter, that she had even alluded to it.

"I suppose we shall soon hear, Judith, of your own marriage, now that you are independent, and there is no necessity for further delay?"

"I suppose so; yes," answered Judith, mechanically. She seemed to be thinking of something else, though her face—on which that pitying expression still lingered—was fixed upon her interlocutor.

"How long is it, Judith, since you have seen Mr. — I mean your Augustus?" It struck Evy not for the first time, of course, but with greater force than it had ever done before, how singular it was that she had never been told his surname.

"Well, I don't know; it must be many months." That was strange, too, thought Evy, for this girl not to know for certain when last she saw her lover. For her own

part she remembered the very day and hour when she had parted from Captain Heyton in Dirleton Park—and as for that interview of yesterday—it seemed to her that though her days should be unhappily prolonged to the extreme limit of human existence, that its exact date would never be erased from her recollection.

"He will have a beautiful bride, whenever it may be, Judith," observed Evy. She had a genuine admiration of her companion's good looks, and to speak of them was almost the only means she had of making herself pleasant to her with sincerity. Flattery was always welcome to her companion, yet she did not acknowledge this little compliment even by a smile. After an uncomfortable silence, "Well, I will go and put on my things," said Judith; and she rose and left the room to do so, while the servants brought her boxes down the stairs. Evy remained in the drawing-room, listening at first to the tread of footsteps, but presently falling into a melancholy reverie, from which she awakened with the sense of having indulged in it for some minutes. This could scarcely have been, however, since Judith, who was generally very quick with her toilette, had not yet come down-stairs. All was quiet now. There was the sound once more of a vehicle in the lane, only it seemed to grow fainter and fainter, leaving the cottage instead of approaching it. What could it mean? She opened the door; the stairs and passage were empty; and on the gravel sweep in front, which was visible from where she stood, there was no vehicle, as she had expected to see.

"Jane, Jane," cried she, "where is Miss Judith?"

"Gone, miss," was that domestic's sententious reply.

"Gone! But she never said 'Good-bye' to me," exclaimed Evy, too astonished at this proceeding to consider the prudence of commenting upon it before the parlour-maid, with whom Miss Judith was no favourite.

"Perhaps she didn't wish to, miss," was Jane's cynical rejoinder, "that is, if (as I've heard said) good-bye means 'God-be-with you.'"

Evy did not reply, but the words of the serving-maid struck a responsive chord within her own bosom, of the existence of which she had been hitherto unconscious. Perhaps Judith was indeed her enemy, albeit, she had done nothing to deserve her hate—and had felt disinclined to make

that show of affection which might have seemed incumbent upon her, at parting. Or, on the other hand, had Judith done her some wrong, the consciousness of which forbade her to receive her own good wishes? And if so, what wrong? Evy asked herself this question in vain. The materials for the true reply were happily not to be found in her own guileless nature.

IN TWO ACTS.

ACT THE FIRST.

THE curtain rises on a scene that is common-place enough, perhaps, but still very pretty. The library of a substantial country house.

It is evening; but the shutters are not closed yet. The leaping fire, burning on the old-fashioned hearth, gives sufficient light for the purposes of the women who are the sole occupants of the room. One of these sits in a low chair; another is lounging on the hearth-rug, supporting herself against the knees of the lady in the chair. And the third lies on a sofa opposite, contemplating with a great air of satisfaction the pretty red-slippered feet which she has elevated on a cushion, in order that she may see them. She is Mrs. Byrne, the popular fascinating wife of one of the keenest sportsmen in this sporting county. And she is the guest of the lady in the low chair, Mrs. Tressilian, and the great friend of that lady's only daughter, Lina, the girl on the hearth-rug.

They are lounging away the dark hours here, hoping that the hunt will come home before they go up to dress, for Mr. Tressilian is master of the hounds, and these three ladies take a keen interest in the runs, and triumphs, and failures of the day. Moreover, they feel as if they could gossip more freely in the dim light, for Mrs. Byrne is here as a married woman for the first time, and she appears to Lina to be endowed with some fresh attributes.

"They must have left off a long way from home, for it's been dark for an hour and a half," Mrs. Tressilian says presently. She has been married more than twenty years, and still her heart palpitates with anxiety if her husband is behind his time. "I always conjure up visions of something having happened if they don't come when I expect them, don't you?" the elder matron continues, addressing the younger one. And Mrs. Byrne rises from the sofa with a laugh, and says, "Oh, no," and comes full into the light of the fire.

She stands clearly revealed now, a woman of about five-and-twenty, of middle height, and slender graceful figure. Her dark hair is wrapped closely round her shapely little head. Her steady clever eyes are well fringed with long dark lashes. Her brow is straight, her small face delicately rounded, her mouth well-formed and flexible, betokening sensibility. Altogether she is a very pretty woman, and her dress of dark blue cloth fitting like a habit becomes her well.

"It's like a dream," Lina says, after looking at her friend for a moment or two. "When I left you six months ago, you didn't know Tom Byrne, and now you're married to him, and so accustomed to it all, that you're not anxious when he's late; how quickly you must have fallen in love?"

"Almost as quickly as I fell out of—" she begins, but checks herself, as something like horrified amazement spreads itself over Mrs. Tressilian's face. "Never mind me, Lina," she answers, "tell me about yourself; haven't you found any one to fall in love with yet?"

The girl looks at her mother, the mother looks at her girl, and Mrs. Byrne's quick eyes detect an expression of happy consciousness on Lina's face, and of proud satisfaction on the face of Mrs. Tressilian. "There is a man in the case," the sage young matron thinks; and she thinks also, "I hope he is here."

"If I'm ever engaged, you shall be the first to know it, Trixy," Lina says, rising up, fair and tall, by her friend's side. And Mrs. Byrne takes the girl's two white hands in her own tiny ones, and looks up into the sweet, proud, pure face that is crowned with an aureole of chestnut hair, and says—

"My dear, I was speaking of love, not of engagements; of course Miss Tressilian will be engaged, and will marry; but I want to know when the icicle thaws and loves."

The pretty married woman throws a good deal of meaning into her last words, but just then there comes the sound of the horn, and the tramp of the horses, and the sound of men's voices, raised in jolly discussion about the day's sport. And Mrs. Tressilian has only time to answer for her daughter—"O Trixy! I'm sure Lina will never do one without the other; you must know Lina well enough for that"—before three men came tramping into the room, splashed, tired, hungry and

happy, for they have had a long run, and have killed. The master advances to the bride, Mrs. Byrne, who has arrived during the day, and welcomes her almost like a second daughter. And Tom Byrne falls a prey to the hearty loving congratulations of Mrs. and Miss Tressilian.

"To have Trixy here again, oh! you don't know what it is," Lina says with effusion, "I'm sure I shall make you jealous, Mr. Byrne, for I shall monopolise so much of her time."

Mrs. Byrne releases her hand from the clasp of her elderly host, and comes forward at the word. Her quick eyes have discerned a "goodly youth" in the background, and—well! Tressilian Place will not be so dull as she feared it might be, if that goodly youth is to be one of her fellow guests.

"Glad you've had a good day, Tom," she says, in passing, to her husband; and then she whispers to Mrs. Tressilian, "One of your sons? introduce him."

"No—a friend of ours, Mr. Carruthers," and then Mr. Carruthers comes forward, and bows to the pretty Mrs. Byrne, and turns from her—turns from her almost without a glance, to tell the tale of the day to Lina Tressilian!

In truth, he is a "goodly youth," there is no denying it. Standing six feet at least, lightly built, lissom in movement, with rings of dark brown hair covering a head that might have been modelled from the Greek; with dark brows and lashes shadowing large green hazel eyes; with a delicately-featured face, that is at the same time strong and sensitive, vivacious and charming. What wonder that Mrs. Byrne determines at once that Lina loves this young Apollo, and that this young Apollo is worth loving. And, thinking this, pretty Mrs. Byrne goes away to dress for dinner without delay. The lounge on the sofa has disordered her hair and crumpled her collar; and, pretty woman as she is, she never commits the folly of too severely testing the power of unadorned charms.

Lina Tressilian and Mr. Carruthers loiter for a minute or two in the library after the others go up to dress. The tale of the chase, apparently, has a very thralling spell for her when told by him; and he seems to like telling it to the graceful, warm-coloured blonde. When, at last, she is leaving the room, she turns round and looks up into the handsome, vivacious face of the man who is following her, and says—

"What do you think of my friend, Mrs. Byrne? Isn't she pretty?"

His eyes are fixed on the face of the girl who is speaking. His heart is full of her. He has not told his love yet in so many words; but he is quite ready to tell it, and she knows this and is satisfied. At present his tones, and the silent, eloquent speech of his eyes, are all-sufficient for her. And she is justified in trusting him as largely as she loves him; for Bertram Carruthers' intentions are strictly honourable, and he is resolved that Lina's love-path shall be a safe and flowery one.

"What do you think of Mrs. Byrne? Isn't she pretty?" she repeats as, in the ardour of his gaze, he forgets to answer her question. And his answer does not annoy her, though Mrs. Byrne is her friend, when he says—

"Pon my word, I didn't notice her."

At which Lina shakes her head in happy reproof, and says—

"Ah! but you must; she is my friend, remember."

He fails to remember this fact; but he does not fail to notice Mrs. Byrne when the latter sails into the drawing-room before the other ladies, and singles him out dexterously from the other men. Her figure is beautiful; not with the beauty of statuesque proportions and white marble-looking flesh, but with the beauty of grace and suppleness. As she crosses the room from the door to the fireplace, where he is standing, her steady, quiet gaze taking him in all the time, he is reminded of the advance a beautiful black snake made upon him once—Mrs. Byrne is in black velvet, with folds of white tulle about her neck and arms, and she knows that she looks well in it.

She talks to him a little about the event of the day—the run; is interested when he is led on to narrate the feats of his own mare, "the best fencer in the field, who has never been known to refuse anything." "Horses never do refuse anything, if the riders throw their hearts over first," she responds in a way that leads him to believe that she has a profound admiration for pluck, and that she thinks him plucky.

"You'll come to the next meet, won't you?" he asks, quickly. "It's on Wednesday—a lawn meet at Beveril Court."

"If Lina will drive me."

"Why not ride? You do ride."

"Yes" (with a smile), "I do ride."

"And jolly well, too, with that figure;

she's just the build for it," the young man thinks, flashing a quick glance of admiration at her.

"Then ride on Wednesday. I don't suppose it will be much of a run; but it will be a regular ladies' day."

"I don't think I care for 'regular ladies' days,'" she says in a low tone. And her perfectly feminine accents rob the remark of anything like fastness or an assumption of masculine tastes. Yet, from those same daintily-modulated accents, more than from her words, he gathers that she can do more than sit upon a horse—that she can ride as well as she looks.

"Let me lend you a mount," he says, eagerly. "I have a little mare, nearly thorough-bred, that will carry you over anything. Do let me lend her to you."

She pauses for half a second, watching him the while with her quiet, steady hazel eyes. Then she says softly—

"Shall you be out that day?"

And, as Mrs. and Miss Tressilian come into the room, he tells her "Yes."

ACT THE SECOND.

It does not promise very much sport, but it is a pretty, lively, amusing scene this lawn-meet at Beveril Court. Half the county is there. There has been a breakfast going on for the last two hours, to which all the hunt have been invited, and now, at one o'clock, they are coming out and mounting, or waiting about for their horses. Mr. Tressilian and the whipper-in are gone off with the hounds to the nearest cover, and the hunt is preparing to follow him across broad pasture lands that are thickly dotted with "tors," as the small rocks which bulge out all around are called in the vernacular.

Lina Tressilian is there, driving her mother in a little Victoria. Pretty, lively, and amusing as the scene is, Lina does not look very well pleased with it, as she sits there watching the skilful way in which Mrs. Byrne is being mounted by Bertram Carruthers on Bertram Carruthers' mare.

The mare is fidgetty, excited by the sound of the horn and the cry of the hounds, and eager to be off. The lady is calm, interested in the conversation of her attendant cavalier, and perfectly satisfied to remain where she is. She has improved the shining hours that have intervened between her introduction to Mr. Carruthers and the present moment, and takes the sort of interest in him that a woman does

take in a man of whom she has rather an intimate knowledge.

Mrs. Byrne has a low monotonously sweet voice, and in this voice she has asked many questions, and uttered many pleasantly flattering little speeches to the Antinous by her side, even when other people have been close at hand. But her share in the conversations have never been heard. It is only his answers that have fallen upon two or three pairs of anxious ears, and his answers have been to the full as flattering as her remarks. Lina is beginning to wish that her unavowed lover would be a little less demonstrative in his thorough appreciation of her dearest friend.

"I know you won't want any looking after," he is saying now admiringly to Mrs. Byrne, who is rather more perfect in her light blue habit than in anything else; "but the mare will go easier if she's with her stable companion, so, with your permission, I'll keep close to you, and show you the way, as it's a strange country to you. May I?"

She gives a low, gracious, pleased assent. "Of course you may," she says; "do you ever pilot Lina?"

He has talked to her about Lina, confided to her (this was just at first), that he is quite ready to surrender his liberty to Miss Tressilian. He has expatiated to Mrs. Byrne on her friend's charms and talents, and general womanly delightfulness. And, having done this, he is astonished to find that he has exhausted his interest in his topic and developed a stronger one in his listener. A quiet hour with Lina now would be like going back to a milk diet after a course of champagne. Therefore he eschews these quiet hours, and devotes the whole of his time to the sparkling married woman. In answer to her question now, "Do you ever pilot Lina," he gives a half curious laugh, and says—

"I have done so, but she isn't at home in the saddle as you are," and then he gets on his horse, and rides away by the side of the lustrous faced brunette, with the soft grey velvet manner, without a glance at the fair, handsome girl in the pony-carriage, who had been his heart's queen only the other day.

He has been "Bertie" in the Tressilian household for a long time, and his views about Lina are pretty well understood in the Tressilian set. It is only natural therefore that a number of intimate friends

speaking of him freely, as they hang about Miss Tressilian's pony-carriage. And Lina, with a face grown heavy, and almost plain with the pangs of a gnawing, quickly growing, jealousy, has to listen to these remarks, and answer them, and call him "Bertie," too. Many of them hurt her feelings by their sagacious remarks, but the one who sends the dagger well home to her heart is one of those admirable people who always "speak their minds," and "dislike beating about the bush." A good-hearted, loud-voiced, popular woman, who has known Lina from the cradle.

She rides up to the little Victoria now, with a broad beaming smile on her face, and begins, without noticing the cloud that is hovering over Lina—

"My dear child, I'm quite relieved to find that the lady who is monopolising Bertie Carruthers is a married woman, and your great friend; I began to be afraid there was something wrong between you and Bertie."

"How should there be anything wrong between me and Bertie, Mrs. Lennox," Lina asks, almost sharply, for she is sore stricken, "we're too old and good friends to quarrel idly, aren't we, mamma?"

"Yes," Mrs. Tressilian says, hopelessly. Out of her own consciousness she would not have evolved distrust of Bertie and Mrs. Byrne. But she has caught the reflection of her daughter, and is very unhappy and much perplexed.

"I should like to know Mrs. Byrne," Mrs. Lennox goes on carelessly. "Stays with you some time, I suppose? Everyone tells me how fascinating she is."

Lina makes a strong effort to resuscitate her feelings of loyal friendship for her disloyal friend.

"She is very fascinating," she says, emphatically. Then, as Mrs. Lennox rides off, she adds with an abrupt descent into the muffled tones of misery, "Mamma, we may as well go home; there's nothing more to see," and with one lingering glance at the "goodly youth" and the graceful woman in the distance, she turns her ponies' heads and drives home as fast as she can.

They do not have a quick find this day. By far the greater portion of the time is spent in loitering about in wooded glens, and on the outskirts of covers in the sunny, crisp weather. Keen sportsmen rage against the want of scent and the rarefaction of the atmosphere. Bertie Carruthers is a keen sportsman, but he does not

rage against the fortune which permits him to stand still for half-an-hour at a time by Mrs. Byrne's side.

She has infused a faint savour of bitterness into the tones of the fancy philosophy she is talking to the young man whose splendid beauty has attracted her fickle admiration for the time: a faint savour of bitterness against things as they are and ever have been with herself, and of indifference to the majority of things, and of unbelief in the majority of people. And through all her remarks an undercurrent runs of there being something sweet in the bitterness of the present, and of her interest being aroused by something now, and of her heart doing battle against the unbelief of her mind. And Bertie is fascinated by her misty metaphysics and her fancy philosophy, and wishes (when he thinks of her at all) that Lina had the art of wording her thoughts and feelings as enthrallingly as does this woman, who is going away soon, and without whom he will find Tressilian very dull.

As they ride home in the gathering evening gloom, still together, he finds himself the principal talker, rather to his surprise. The fact leads him to suppose that Mrs. Byrne is much interested in his topic, which happens to be himself. The truth being that Mrs. Byrne is tired, and perfectly aware that men like to be listened to. So she listens with flattering attention, makes her manner more like a piece of exquisitely toned grey velvet than ever, and pets his favourite mare, calling her darling!

She "means no harm" she tells herself when she allows her hand to remain in his, when he clasps it at length as it caresses his mare's mane. He "has seen many small hands," he tells her, "but her's is something unique in size." And Mrs. Byrne laughs and says, "Yes; but hasn't dear Lina nice, comfortable, useful-looking hands?"

She "means no harm," and the young fellow by her side means absolutely nothing. His neighbour's wife would be a very sacred personage in his eyes, if he could only remember the fact of her being his neighbour's wife! But Mrs. Byrne has the art of making men forget this. So he goes on with his sentimental fooling until they reach Tressilian Place, and then they saunter in together to the library and find it vacant.

A warm low fire is burning there, and it is pleasant, after the fatigues of the day, to sit

down on the sofa in the glow, and have the tea which Lina's forethought had ordered, brought to her; and Mrs. Byrne, who likes pleasant things, becomes more velvety than ever under the subtle, soothing influence of comfort. She takes her hat off, and bends her graceful figure forward towards the fire which gleams up now and again, lighting up the slender grace of that figure.

Her dusky hair, her courage in the saddle, and her slow, soft, tender ways, her subtle little half hints of having been hardened by Fate, are one and all revelations to him. "In all his experience," he tells himself (it may be mentioned that his experience is not very wide) he "has met with nothing like Mrs. Byrne." It seems to him quite a right and natural thing to do, as he does presently, kneel down before her, and chafe her little cold hands into warmth.

She bending above him, smiling into his eyes half sadly the while, "means no harm," of course, but can't help wondering, half maliciously, "what Lina would think of it all," as he bends his head down and kisses her hands and mutters, "I am falling in love with you." She releases one hand, and places it on his brow, brushing back his rings of dark brown hair, and they are both of them utterly oblivious that Lina has opened the door, and is standing there paralysed.

It is a pretty little bit of acting to the cool-headed, cooler-hearted, married woman. It is a piece of excitement which he cannot resist to the young man. To the watching girl it is the death-blow of every hope she holds dear in life.

Mrs. Byrne goes away in a few days, and finds fresh hearers for her mock metaphysics and fancy philosophy. Bertie Carruthers allows himself to be bored, distraught and irritable, for a week without her, and then remembers that "Lina is really a very nice girl." But the vital spark has fled from his love for her, and Lina knows it, and the love drama of her life ends with the second act of Mrs. Byrne's romantic comedy.

LONDON STREET CRIES.

As the great macadamising steam roller of civilisation passes over us, we become daily smoother and flatter. The great city is less picturesque than it used to be. Street sights lack the old charm. May-day

and its dancing votaries, with the genius of spring personified by Jack-in-the-Green, is almost a thing of the past. Poor old Guy Fawkes ekes out a miserable existence, and is frowned on by the High Church clergy. The grotto of St. James at Compostella is no longer quaintly typified by a beehive of oyster shells, with a farthing candle burning inside. True, there are strange utterances in our streets that remind us of the changes of the seasons, as pleasant recallers of old memories as the cry of the cuckoo, or the twitter of the April swallow. What Londoner is there who, from his open window in June, does not feel a certain charm in the gleam of bright colour, as the itinerant flower-seller's truck comes in sight, and the cheery shout goes up of "Here ye are—all a-growing and a-blowing?" or, on a warm spring morning, when fires have been a week or two disused, who does not like to see the female street seller waving cascades of many-coloured papers as she chants forth to a plaintive rhythm, "Any ornaments for your fire-stoves?"

Let us, then, run over a few of the London street cries which we find recorded in old books, recalling some of the quaintest, and showing the changes they have from time to time undergone.

The first we hear of London street cries is in the earlier poems of that intolerable dull old monk of Bury, Lydgate, a successor of Chaucer, who wrote most of his wearisome poems in the reign of Henry VI. In his "London Lackpenny" he describes his first greetings in London:—

Then unto London I dyd me hye,
Of all the land it beareth the pryse;
"Hot pescodes," one began to crye,
"Strabery rype," and "cherries on the ryse."
One bad me come nere and by some spyce,
Peper and safforne they gang me bede,
But for lack of money I myght not spede.

The men who offered Lydgate pepper and saffron (the latter used to colour soup in those ages) were not itinerant salesmen, but the 'prentice boys standing at their masters' stalls, like the "Buy-buy-buy" butchers of Clare Market and Whitechapel of the present day. "The cherries on the ryse" were cherries tied to a stick, as they are often sold now, the stick being meant to represent a real bough of the tree.

The chap-books and pamphlets of Elizabeth's reign, often written by poor poets of genius, and needy dramatists like Decker, Nash, and Greene, abound with allusions to the street cries of the period. Promi-

ment among these were those of the poor prisoners begging at the dungeon grates of Ludgate and the City Compters—melancholy voices, all day doling out—

“Bread and—meat—bread—and meat—for the—ten—der—mercy of God to the poor pris—ners of Newgate—four score and ten—poor—pris’ners!”

Or, at another—

“Here lies a company of very poor women in the dark dungeon—hungry, cold, and comfortless, night and day. Pity the poor women in the dark dungeon!”

Another common Elizabethan street cry was—

“Round and sound, all of a colour; buy a very fine marking stone, marking stone; round and sound, all of a colour; buy a very fine marking stone; very fine!”

With these alternated—

“Salt—salt—white—Wor—ster—spice salt.” “Buy a very fine mousetrap, or a tormenter for your fleas.” “Kitchen-stuff, maids.” “I have white moist, white hard lettuce; white young onions.” “I have rock samfire, rock samfire.” “Buy a mat, a mil mat—a hassock for your pew; or a pouch to thrust your feet in.” “Whiting, maids—whiting.” “Hot fine oatcakes—hot.” “Small coals here.” “Will you buy any milk to-day?” “Lanthorn, candle, light ho! maid ho! light here!”

But the itinerant broom man was the most distinguished of all the Elizabethan street sellers by his songs and his loud cry of “New brooms, green brooms; will you buy any? Come, maidens, come quickly, let me take a penny.” His song is too characteristic to neglect:—

My brooms are not steep’d,
But very well bound,
My brooms be not crooked,
But smooth cut and round.
I wish it should please you
To buy of my broom,
Then it would ease me
If market were done.
Have you any old boots,
Or any old shoes,
Pouchings or buskins
To cope with new brooms?
If so you have, maidens,
I pray you bring hither,
That you and I, friendly,
May bargain together.

In the reign of James I. we find in a curious old music-book, full of rounds and catches, entitled—“Melismata. Musically Phansies. Fitting the Court, Citie, and Courtrey Hymovrs. To three, four, and five Voyces.”

To all delightfull, except to the spitefull,
To none offensive, except to the pensive.

London. Printed by William Stanley, for Thomas Adams. 1611,” an old city round, which ran thus:—

“Broomes for old shoes, pouchings, booties and buskings, will yee buy a-ny new broome?” And another which clubs together some street cries of Shakespeare’s time:—“New oysters, new oysters, new new cockles, cockles nye, fresh herrings. Will yee buy any straw? Hay yee any kitchen-stuffe, maids? Pippins fine. Cherrie ripe, ripe, ripe; Cherrie ripe, ripe, ripe.”

On the cry of “Cherry ripe,” Ben Jonson composed his charming song of that name, which is only surpassed by his still more beautiful song, “Drink to me only with thine eyes.”

We also find in a play of the reign of James I. the following curious street cries enumerated. “Lanthorne and a whole candell light; hang out your lights heare!” “I have fresh cheese and cream.” “Buy a brush or a table booke.” “Fine oranges, fine lemons.” “Ells or yeards; by yeards or ells.” “I have ripe strawburys, ripe—straw—burys.” “I have screenes, if you desier, to keep your butey from ye fire.” “Codlinges hot, hot codlinges.” “Buy a steele or a tinder-box.” “Quicke paravinkells, quicke, quicke.” “Worke for a cooper, worke for a cooper.” “Bandestrings, or hankercher buttons.” “A tanker bearer.” “Macarell new; maca—rell.” “Buy a hone, or a whetstone, or a marking ston.” “White unions, whitt St. Thomas unions.” “Mat for a bed, buy a doore mat.” “Radishes or lettis, tow bunches a peny.” “Have you any worke for a tinker?” “Buy my harti-chokes, mistris.” “Maribones, maidens, maribones.” “I ha’ ripe cucumber, ripe cucumber.” “Chimney sweepe.” “New flounders, new.” “Some broken breade and meate for ye poore prisoners; for the Lord’s sake pittie the poore.” “Buy my dish of great smelts.” “Have you any chairs to mend?” “Old showes or booties.” “Will you buy some broome.” “Mussels, lilly white mussels.” “Small cole a penny a peake.” “What kitchen-stuffe have you, maidens?” “A fresh cheary and cream.” “Have you any wood to cleave?” “Potatoes—ripe potatoes!” “Knives to grind.” “Old chairs to mend.” “Pears to bake.” “Milk a penny a quart.” “Grey peas and bacon.” “Fresh herrings.” “Shrews-

bury puddings." "The waterman." "The blacking man." "The pedlar." "Cherry ripe." "Buy a mousetrap."

Many of the street salesmen of the old times were well-known characters. Two of these, Tiddy Doll, the musical pieman, and Doll, the pippin-seller, lost their lives on the Thames at the great Frost Fair of 1739, and the pippin-woman's death is thus noticed by Mr. Gay, in the eleventh book of his "Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London":—

Ah, Doll! all mortals must resign their breath,
And Industry itself submit to death!
The cracking crystal yields—she sinks—she dies—
Her head chopt off from her lost shoulders flies.
"Pippins," she cry'd, but death her voice confounds,
And "Pip, Pip, Pip," along the ice resounds.

The Holborn flying pieman's cry of "Hot, Hot, Hot," was punctually echoed in later years by a needy Liquorpond-street flying barber, with his cry of "Hot Water." His stand was a Fleet-Market pudding-stool, upon which he actually shaved many hundreds of persons.

Another celebrated gingerbread-nut seller of the end of the last century was a man who officiated as Merry Andrew to one of the quack doctors at Bartholomew Fair. He surpassed all his brethren in wit and gesture. At other times he sold gingerbread about Covent Garden, and to keep up his rank at fairs, where he earned a guinea a day, besides presents, he made a point of never laughing at or even noticing a joke when plying his trade, though he was polite to all customers.

As early as 1810 it was the custom during a severe frost for parties of fishermen to parade London streets, carrying oars or boat-hooks, from which nets and fish were suspended. Their dolorous cry was, "Pray remember the fishermen—the poor frozen-out fishermen," and they sometimes dragged about a sailing-boat upon wheels. The grimy frozen-out gardeners (who never handled a spade in their lives) are often now to be seen in frost time, though they do not, as formerly, carry bunches of greens hoisted upon pitchforks.

"I once," says old "Rainy-day" Smith, "met a party of Battersea women of this tribe, who certainly are a distinct set of beings. They were warmly differing from each other as to the street they were in, some contending that they had not been there before, when they were all at once convinced by one of the bearded hags merely pointing her finger to the ginshop at the corner."

Another well-known London street cry of about 1808 was, "Hard metal spoons to sell or change!" The utterer of this cry was a man named Conway, who had eleven London districts which he perambulated, and who used to boast that he had never had a day's illness in his life, and never slept out of his bed. "He walks," says a contemporary, "on an average twenty-five miles a day, and this he has done for nearly forty-four years." His shoes were made from old boots, and a pair would last him about six weeks. In his walks he frequently found small pieces of money, but never more than a one pound note. He recollected a windmill standing near Moorfields, and remembered Old Vinegar, a surly old fellow, so called from his brutal habits. This man provided sticks for the cudgel-players, whose sports commenced on Easter Monday, and were much enjoyed by the Bridewell School boys.

Vinegar was the maker of the rings for the boxers in Moorfields; and would cry out, after he had arranged the spectators, by beating their shins, "Mind your pockets all round." The name of Vinegar has frequently been given to crabbed ring-makers and boxers. Ward, in his London Spy, thus introduces a Vinegar champion:—

Bred up i' th' fields of Lincoln's Inn,
Where Vinegar reigns master;
The forward youth doth thence begin
A broken head to lose or win,
For shouts, or for a plaster.

A very scarce song, in the British Museum, on the Cries of London, to the tune of the Merry Christchurch Bells, gives us a curious list of the London street cries about 1793. How strangely they differ from those of the present day! Here are a few of the most quaint:—

Come buy my gudgeons fine and new,
Old clothes to change for earthenware;
Come, taste and try, before you buy,
Here's dainty Poplin pears.
Diddle, diddle, diddle dumplings ho!
Any old clothes, suits or coats;
Come buy my singing birds,
Oranges or lemons, Newcastle salmon,
Come buy my ropes of onions, ho!
Come buy my sand, fine silver sand,
Two bunches a penny turnips, ho!
I'll change your pins for coney skins,
Maids do you want any milk below?
Maids have ye any kitchen stuff?
Will you buy my fine artichokes?
Come buy my brooms.
Will you buy my white heart cabbages, ho!
Come buy my nuts, my fine small nuts,
Two cans a penny, crack and try;
Here's cherries round and very sound,
Here's fine herrings eight a groat,
Hot codlins, pies, and tarts;
New mackerel I have to sell,
Come buy my Well fleet oysters, ho!

Come buy my whittings fine and new.
 Maids have ye any hair to sell,
 Either flaxen, black, or brown?
 Work for a cooper,
 I'll hoop your tubs and pails.
 Maids have you any chairs to sell?
 Here's hot spice gingerbread of the best,
 Come, taste and try before you buy;
 Here's elder buds to purge your blood,
 Here's hot rice milk and barley broth;
 Plum pudding a groat a pound.
 Here's fine rosemary, sage, and thyme,
 Come buy my ground ivy;
 Here's featherfew, jilliflowers, and rue,
 Come buy my knotted marjorem, ho!
 Come buy my mint, my fine green mint,
 Here's fine lavender for your clothes.

An allusion to Admiral Warren, whose great victory over the French took place in 1796, pretty well establishes the date of this song, the details of which are worthy of some comment. The "diddle, diddle, dumplings, ho!" is evidently an imitation of Tiddy Doll's facetiousness. Poplin pears are no longer known; and the sale of mint, featherfew, and rue shows that simples were still much used for medicine by the poor. Lavender is still often sold in the street; and "taste and try before you buy" is still a cry of ginger-bread-nut sellers at country fairs.

Some details of prices can be gathered from other verses of this singular song, such as, "Come, buy my shrimps, fine new shrimps, two pots a penny.—Yorkshire muffins.—Barrel figs, threepence a pound.—New laid eggs, ten for a groat.—Twopence a hundred, cockles, ho!—Butter, sixpence a pound."

Alas, for the glories of progress! For the price of everything has nobly kept step with the march forward of civilisation!

"Maids, do you want any small coal?" reminds us of the simple days of itinerant coal merchants, like the celebrated musical small-coal man, who used, in the last century, to carry coal about in the morning, and in the evening to tune his violoncello and mix with our first musicians. "New rice, twopence a pound," seems to have been a street cry, or a cry at the grocers' doors in 1798. We had, also, the long-since obsolete one of, "Buy my pike, my fine live pike." The herbs sold in the street were far more numerous than now; and we find among those mentioned many for which there are now, we should think, few customers, indeed. Among these we may particularise pennyroyal, marygold, scurvy grass, wormwood, mugwort, house leek, wood sorrel, bear's foot, balm, hyssop, and cinquefoil.

And all this was in the day when there were women barbers in St. Giles's, old clothes'-men who collected old wigs, and flying barbers who ran about to customers with pots of hot water and metal basins; when London streets were narrow, pent houses and gable ends were common, when highwaymen were still common, and thieves were strung up by the dozen on Monday mornings at Newgate: and London life, altogether, was simpler, rougher, quicker, and more characteristic. The street beggars and street vendors who uttered the cries we have enumerated at the beginning of the century were of a different race from those of the present day. Where have we now any one to compare with the torso on a go-cart, whom Charles Lamb sketches so admirably?

The man with "young lambs to sell," also mentioned by Lamb, has passed away and given place to dirty urchins who sell fuses. Ann Seggs, the malicious beggar, who dressed with care, and represented herself as the sister of Mrs. Siddons, is no more. "Old Rusty," the dealer in old iron, immortalised in old books of London characters, has left us. The Welsh dwarf, three feet high, who performed feats of strength, has vanished. Mr. Creuse, who never begged of any one, yet never refused a penny, and who, eventually, left a considerable sum behind him, and had two mourning coaches at his Drury-lane funeral, has long ceased his perambulations. All is growing flat, stale, and unprofitable. Even Joseph Church, the bow-legged ballad singer, is forgotten; and, when Church is forgotten, how can meaner men expect to be remembered? There is no street humour or original invention left, no individual character, no oddity.

Yet we take comfort, for, as we write, a shrill, fantastic voice cries at our area, the following quaint appeal, "Any old coats or umbrellas to sell to-day, ladies? Never mind how old they are, ladies; look 'em up, look 'em up!"

STEEL RAIL MAKING.

LIKE railway servants, the rails themselves are now compelled to do a great deal of work. Old-fashioned wrought iron rails did well enough in their day, but the enormous weight they have recently been called upon to carry has proved too much for them, and the substitution of the material known as Bessemer steel offers

so many advantages that its adoption is becoming daily more general. When the importance of the destinies committed hourly to these slender metallic bars is taken into consideration, it at once becomes apparent that their durability, rigidity, and toughness are matters which concern not only the interests of railway companies, but the safety and well-being of the whole body politic. In addition to toughness and almost everlasting resistance to friction, the new steel possesses the great merit of cheapness. Lasting at least ten times as long as ordinary wrought iron, steel made by the Bessemer method from pig iron requires but one ton and five hundred-weight of fuel, while common wrought iron requires two tons, and Sheffield cast steel ten tons eight hundred-weight. Costing but little more than the best iron rails to begin with, the new-fashioned rails are practically indestructible. Of the popularity of Bessemer steel some idea may be formed from the fact that last spring Europe contained one hundred and sixty-five "converters," producing annually seven hundred thousand tons of steel, and that since then an enormous number of "converters" have been set to work, while the demand for this peculiar kind of iron manufacture—even at the present moment—far outruns the supply.

Regard being had to the enormous requirements of the world for railway material, and the probable usurpation of the entire railway work of the world by one peculiar metal, it may perhaps be worth while to trace the rise and progress of a steel rail until it forms part of a railway track enduring without flinching the weight of thousands of the children of men speeding on through sunshine and darkness, across the icy steppes of Russia and the seething delta of the Ganges, over mighty rivers and towering Cordilleras, across wide estuaries and through the heart of mighty mountains, on their daily errands of business or pleasure, joy or sorrow, weal and woe.

Cradled in the lap of old mother earth the promising infant appears in the shape of that peculiar species of iron ore known to the learned as hæmatite. This variety of ore is remarkable for its richness, and is found in great abundance in Northamptonshire—whose "kidney" ore is highly celebrated—in Cornwall, in Antrim, in Somersetshire, North Lancashire, West Cumberland, Spain, and Southern Virginia. At a certain stage of its existence

it requires to be dosed with spiegeleisen—a peculiar metal made from spicular hæmatite, and containing a large proportion of manganese; but for the present it will be as well to confine our observations to the reduction of iron ore to the condition known by the homely name of pig iron.

In a period of arbitrary and fanciful classification, it was customary to speak of the world as having passed successively through the stone, and bronze, and having lastly attained the iron age. It was assumed—and with sufficient plausibility—that because objects of bronze, and no objects of iron had been found in ancient tombs and monuments, that therefore the manufacture of bronze preceded that of iron. It was urged, that because virgin copper was frequently found, and pure metallic iron hardly at all, that therefore the industry of early ages was devoted to the production of copper, while iron was entirely neglected. Recent researches have completely dissipated these fanciful theories. The wonder so often expressed that the Egyptians should have graven their wondrous hieroglyphics without the aid of iron tools, has completely disappeared. A fiction of the imagination that the ancients possessed some lost art of hardening bronze, has faded away before the discovery of the iron-works of the Pharaohs, and the very simple conclusion that ancient iron tools have long since disappeared through the agency of oxidation or rust, a power to which iron is peculiarly subject. Assyrian relics demonstrate that iron not only was known at Nineveh, but that it was probably common and cheap, as compared with bronze. In the British Museum is a small casting, in the shape of the foreleg of a bull. The core is of iron, and the bronze was evidently cast around it, either to save expenditure of bronze, or to give greater strength to the ring of a tripod.

Keenly alive to the advantage of strength, combined with lightness and graceful outline, the Assyrians frequently bound copper wire over the iron skeletons of their tripods, and in these cases the iron has remained undestroyed—even to this day. In the later days of Greece and Rome, the manufacture of iron and steel was well understood, and it is worthy of remark that the process of steel making, used by the Romans, prevailed in Germany as late as the sixteenth century. In the far East, the art of iron making has been understood for thousands of years. China has

known the art of casting iron for countless ages; while in Japan, and especially in India, evidence—in the shape of gigantic wrought iron columns and beams—exists to prove that at remote periods the natives of those countries produced huge masses of malleable iron, hardly exceeded by the achievements of modern forge machinery.

From causes which it would be foreign to our purpose to discuss, the production of iron, in India, has dwindled to insignificant limits. No large works exist, and iron making is only pursued by people of very low caste, who wander about the country. Their apparatus is of the most primitive kind. In small clay furnaces, with charcoal for fuel, and a blast caused by foot or hand bellows, smelting goes on for eight or ten hours, at the end of which time from ten to twenty pounds of iron are found at the bottom of the furnace, and after being purified, by reheating and hammering, the outcome of the operation is a lump of iron of excellent quality.

Without doubt this method represents the primeval production of iron. In Europe systems but little improved from this prevailed for many centuries—charcoal being the only fuel employed. The result was malleable iron—the great impetus to iron production given by the use of the blast furnace being comparatively modern, while the making of cast iron in the West arose not more than four hundred years ago.

From the hand furnace of the Hindoo, through the low furnaces of the middle ages, the idea of the modern blast furnace was, by degrees, arrived at. Even now many different notions prevail as to the proper height for a blast furnace—those of Cleveland towering majestically over their competitors.

The huge edifice, constructed of masonry and fire-brick, and sometimes attaining the height of seventy-five feet—known as the modern blast furnace—may be not inaptly compared, especially as regards its internal shape, to a huge pipe bowl, with this important difference in its application, that, whereas the oxygen necessary to ensure combustion is supplied by the atmospheric air at the top of the pipe bowl, and the smoke is forced downwards by the pressure of the air into the vacuum created by the inspiration of the smoker, the necessary air is forced into the bottom of the blast furnace by a powerful blowing engine through tubes technically called "tuyeres."

It may be observed that the influence of what is loosely called "draught" on a fire is simply that of a rapidly renewed supply of oxygen, and it is also remarkable that only a small proportion of the oxygen contained in the air is available for the purposes of combustion. Generally containing oxygen to the extent of twenty-one per hundred volumes, air demands at least seventeen volumes for itself, as in air reduced to seventeen per cent. of oxygen a candle will not burn. The surplus four per cent. is, therefore, all that avails for the purpose of feeding a flame; and in the course of performing ~~that~~ operation, only two or at most three per cent. are really burnt. It follows, therefore, that to supply a tall furnace with sufficient atmospheric fuel, an enormous quantity of air is required. The smith's bellows, the hand or foot bellows of the Hindoo, and the blowing engine therefore represent only various applications of one simple natural truth.

The bowl of our pipe then is to be "blown" into instead of "drawn," and having established this fact, our next duty is to charge it. Iron ore—having in most cases been previously "roasted" or calcined, to expel water, and, as far as possible sulphur—is thrown into the top of the huge pipe alternately, or sandwich-wise, with fuel. This may consist of wood or peat charcoal, coke, or coal. An important addition to the "charge" is a certain quantity of limestone as "flux," but the proportions of the charge vary immensely according to the nature of the raw, calcined, or mixed ores employed. At the Bowling works five-and-a-half tons of raw and calcined ore, nearly a ton of limestone and two-and-a-quarter tons of coke are required to produce one ton of pig iron; but it is impossible to lay down any iron rule in these matters.

The ores and "flux" having been properly mixed, fuel is first "tipped" into the huge pipe bowl, then a layer of ore, then another layer of fuel, till the bowl is nearly full, when the pipe is lighted, and the furnace is "blown in," a great event in an iron district. While in work, the huge bowl or shaft of the blast furnace is kept nearly filled with solid materials. These are from time to time "tipped" into the upper end, and gradually sink down as the work of smelting progresses. Meanwhile, a continuous supply of air is forced into the lower end, through the "tuyeres" under heavy pressure, and so proportioned in quantity as to maintain a

rapid rate of combustion. From time to time the furnace is "tapped" and the molten iron run off into moulds, when it becomes the "pig iron" of commerce. Like a steadily working volcano, the blast furnace never halts in its labours. Burnt away and "tapped" below, and constantly replenished from above, the huge machine consumes charge after charge; and except in cases where the gases are utilised, illumines the night with its ruddy glare.

In many huge iron and steel works, the molten iron is not allowed to cool, but is at once conducted to the "converters" to be made into steel. The two processes, however, are more frequently carried on in distinct establishments. One of these has recently been founded on the banks of the Thames, and as its arrangements comprise all recent improvements, it may fairly serve as a type of the present state of the manufacture of Bessemer steel rails.

On the shore, opposite to the Isle of Dogs, in the dreary and unpicturesque district known as "the marsh," East Greenwich, among docks, damp, and ditches, but not dulness, the Bessemer Steel and Ordnance Works have their being. A somewhat steep climb over water-washed stones, brings the visitor to the wharf, where ships, laden with coke or Cumberland hematite pig—or iron made from the choice ores of Cumberland—discharge their cargoes. From the ship's side a tramway runs to an hydraulic lift, fitted with a turntable, whereon the trucks are lifted to a sufficient height to be tilted into the "cupolas" wherein the first process of converting a pig of raw iron into a finished rail takes place. The cupola is simply a small species of blast furnace, the metal and fuel being disposed in layers on each other, and a "blast" applied in the usual way. Melting goes on rapidly, and while the raw iron is melting in one cupola, a small charge of spiegeleisen, or iron containing a large per centage of manganese, is melting in a baby cupola near at hand. Suspended by massive machinery, over a huge pit, are the "converters"—vast iron decanters, lined with "ganister," a stone dug from beneath the Yorkshire moors. These receptacles are now ready for the molten iron, and bend their huge mouths greedily towards the narrow channel destined to convey the molten "pig." The cupola is tapped, and the burning, yet distinctly rippling stream flows encircled by a shower of sparks, into the converter, where again it is subjected

to a powerful blast. The reason of this proceeding is that iron is so unequally charged with carbon, that it is found preferable to get rid of what there is, and then add as much as is wanted, instead of attempting to make up the variable balance. Air then is forced through the molten mass, wherein the oxygen of the air combines with the carbon of the iron, and passes off in flames of surpassing brilliancy as carbonic acid gas. This beautiful part of the process lasts about twenty minutes, during which the chief of the converting department watches the flame pouring out of the mouth of the converter, through a spectroscope, carefully noting the increase and diminution of the dark bands that reveal carbonic acid gas. When these disappear, the iron is thoroughly decarbonised, and is fit to receive the charge of about ten or twelve per cent. of spiegeleisen. Once more the huge converter, containing four tons of metal, bows its flaming head, and receives through a tiny conduit the liquid complement of spiegeleisen. Amalgamation is rapid and complete. The moulds are ready. Stooping once more, the docile "converter" pours the liquid steel into a vast ladle, which, travelling round the pit, bestows on each mould its proper quantum. Without being allowed to cool, the moulds are hoisted out of the cavity, and compelled—oft by mighty hammers, wielded by muscular arms—to disgorge their already solidified but still glowing contents. Not a moment is lost. Caloric, at the present price of fuel, is too precious to be wasted. Whirled away on a truck, the ingot is seized and projected into a gas furnace. Reheated to a glow the ingot is torn from its fiery den, and wheeled rapidly towards an instrument of torture, called a cogging mill. A stalwart man is lying in wait. Pouncing upon the ingot, he seizes it with a pair of tongs, and turns the smaller end towards the jaws of the mill. Slowly the monster turns the resistless wheels, as if licking his lips at the prospect of his prey. The smaller end is presented to his jaws, and the huge ingot is gradually sucked in. On the other side busy workmen seize upon the steely mass, now squeezed out of all recognition, and the heavy "reversing" jaws again and again close upon it, till it emerges from the torment a lengthy oblong mass, called a "bloom."

During this preliminary torture, the ingot has not only been pressed out of its

own likeness, but has lost a considerable quantity of heat. The worried pig, transformed into a "bloom" is, therefore, at once reconducted to the ingenious "regenerating gas furnace"—in itself a marvel of construction—wherein it is allowed a short period of fiery repose. Dragged forth once more, the bloom is wheeled to the railing mill, a monster possessing many mouths of decreasing dimensions. Passed through the largest set of jaws, the bloom acquires the rough semblance of a rail, and is then run through the others, gaining by each successive process in length what it loses in bulk, till, at last, it emerges from the trial a perfect rail.

Falling into the hands of another band of tormentors, the rail, still incandescent, is now sawed to the proper length, allowed to cool, exactly gauged, punched into holes, to admit of its being fastened to the "fish-plates," and straightened.

The rail is now complete, and is deposited in a barge, ultimately to be laid down in a, perhaps, distant country, where, let us hope, it will truly and faithfully bear the burdens imposed upon it.

YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOBSON'S CHOICE," ETC.

CHAPTER LXI. "GOOD BYE!"

"POOR Rachel came and sat with me last night. She couldn't sleep, she said, and, as you know, I don't sleep very well. So we had a long chat together. She'd been wanting for some time, it seems, to talk to me about her father's affairs. I knew he did not leave them in a very flourishing condition, but I wasn't quite prepared, I own, to hear all she had to tell me. Naturally it distressed her very much, poor child. My uncle died a ruined man. It's a chance if there's anything left for Rachel, though Vickery, I believe, like a good old fellow, as he is, means to try and save something for her out of the wreck. But that isn't all. My will, which we thought to be rather a joke at the time, proves even now to have had a suspicion of absurdity about it. I fancied I'd really something to leave, you know. It seems I hadn't. My little property has gone. It stood in my uncle's name as surviving trustee, and—well, he was quite welcome to it. I wish it had been of more help to him than it seems to have been. But it pained Rachel very much to tell me this, as you may suppose. She thought I had

been unfairly used; and yet how could she reproach her father, whom she loved so dearly? She couldn't in words, you know; and yet to accuse him even in thought, and perhaps she couldn't altogether avoid doing that, troubled her sorely. It seemed a wrong done to his memory. There was something sacrilegious about it. One can't blame the dead, they're so helpless: they can't answer or explain—and she loved him so! Then she talked of working hard, and at some distant date, far distant of course, paying me back—making good, she called it—the money that's gone. Well, I wouldn't listen to that; and I said and did all I could to comfort her. I told her of the will I'd made—thanks to you, old fellow—leaving her all I possessed, or thought I possessed. I explained to her, or tried to, that the money was therefore really her own, all along—to do what she liked with, to hand to my uncle, if she had so pleased. And that there was nobody to be blamed in the matter; that my intentions had been anticipated, that was all. I couldn't quite get her to see it as I wanted her to; but I think she was relieved in some measure. I dwelt expressly upon her poor father's unvarying kindness to me, and how grateful I felt for it. And I assured her again and again that the money was quite at his service, and that at the merest hint that he had needed it, I would cheerfully have made it all over to him. I added that it wasn't likely I should feel the want of it now. But that didn't cheer her much. She's very tender-hearted—we've always been like brother and sister together—and she regards me most affectionately. I'm sure I've done little enough to deserve it. The thought of my death troubled her extremely."

"It's a pity, too," he added, after a pause. "I had looked forward to that money being a little provision for her. It's hard to go and leave her so poorly off as she must be. I do wish now that I'd settled down and been more industrious, and so had a little money of my own earning, to leave behind me. But it's vain wishing that. Poor Rachel! What's to become of her? I don't like to think. It seemed so cruel to leave her quite penniless and friendless. Of course old Vickery will stand by her to the last, but he's getting on in years is Vickery. What's to happen—what's to become of her when he's gone?"

I begged him to be at ease on that head. While I lived, I assured him, Rachel should lack for nothing. So far as I might, I would constitute myself her guardian and protector. I would devote myself to promoting her welfare. Then, lest I had betrayed myself by speaking too warmly, I promised also my mother's interest on her behalf. If need should arise, I said, the Down Farm should always be her home in the future.

"How very good of you, Duke—and your mother! I'm sure a kinder soul never breathed. Do you know—this is but idle talk, yet I'll mention it, for it's on the tip of my tongue—I sometimes thought that you might take a fancy to Rachel. She's not beautiful, and she's led such a trying life, poor thing, that most likely, she wouldn't be considered very attractive by people generally. Her manner's so staid and subdued, and she hasn't the winning, lively airs and ways that girls of her age usually have. Yet she's so good and pure-minded, and affectionate. A man couldn't choose for a wife one nobler, or better, really. But I know it's useless my talking like this. You esteem and respect Rachel, of course, no one that knows her could do otherwise, but your heart, as you told me long since, is possessed by another. It can't be helped; and yet it seems a pity too."

I longed to tell him of his error, to avow to him the love I cherished for Rachel. How I despised myself for my old unlucky passion! Yet I had been proud of it once, and had revealed it very fully to him with boyish effusiveness. He had even envied me in regard to its romantic nature. It seemed a poor and paltry thing enough now; yet he still held fast to this old Rosetta episode in my story, and could not be convinced that it was ended for ever; that it had been but a fatuous, feverish business while it lasted; and that now I was quit of it altogether.

But I could not but be silent, however. If he were to know of my love, I felt that he would speak of it to Rachel, would, perhaps, intercede with her on my behalf, urging my suit upon her. And she, out of her love for him, able to deny him nothing, might be tempted to yield me her hand. I could not accept it on such terms. It was the free gift of her heart I sought. Her love, won by mine; not given me for another's sake. This might be hopeless; but it was this I sighed for.

So I held my peace; the while I felt

I was denying him what he would have counted real comfort. I charged myself with cruelty to him. I was acting selfishly, with a duplicity and want of consideration for him opposed to the friendship I professed. And at such a time of all others! But I satisfied myself that it was best so; that, indeed, it must be so. I could not tell him that I loved Rachel as deeply and fervently as he could wish.

"It can't be helped," he repeated. "And, perhaps, one does wrong to be occupied with so many plans, and to be looking so far forward. Why need I busy myself about a future in which there can be no share for me? Yet, poor Rachel! She has had so little happiness. I should like to think that she would be well-cared for by-and-by, with time for peace and rest, and with some good, honest man for her husband, who'd know her real worth, and would prize her, and do all he might to make her happy. That can't be you, Duke, old friend, it seems. I was wrong to think it could. One can't dispose of other people's hearts, or indulge in cut-and-dried schemes for their future."

It never once occurred to him, apparently, that Rachel did not love me: possibly could not be brought to love me. Nor did he, I think, suspect that her heart was wholly in his own keeping. Once it had seemed to me that he entertained suspicion of this. But it was clear that he did not now.

"For another reason," he said, presently, "I regret the loss of my small property. I wanted to make a few little presents to the folks here who've been so good to me. Kem and Reube, and the rest of them. There's no one on the farm that hasn't shown kindness to me in some way or other. God bless them for it! I wish I could repay them in however trifling a degree. Somehow, it's only by giving them money that one's able to show what one really feels in such case. And the light purse I brought down here with me is very light indeed now. There's but a very few shillings left in it. Still, I should not like them to think I'd forgotten them or was close-fisted with my money. I've never been that, as you know, Duke, though I'm well assured that they didn't do what they did, poor souls, for money, or in any thought of getting it, but out of simple kindness and goodness of heart. God bless them for it! I say again. And, Duke, dear old fellow, you must let me be your debtor once more. Give them each

a little present, will you? What you think fit, and say it comes from me, and that I hadn't forgotten them. The lie won't be reckoned against you; it will be charged to me. But we should both, in any case, be forgiven for it. And say something kind to them all in my name. I'd something more to tell you; but I grow too weak. I must rest a while, I think. My voice is so faint, too; I'm sure you can hardly make out what I say. There's a drink of some sort on the mantelpiece, isn't there? Thank you; That's better. And don't take away your hand, please, Duke, even if I doze for a little. I should like to be sure that you are still beside me when I wake up again. My time's so short now. I must make the most of it—though it's a shame, I feel, to tie you to my bedside like this. But you won't mind. I know there's no end to your kindness to me."

He had nothing of an invalid's querulousness, though now and then he was somewhat fanciful. He was especially anxious that the light should fall fully upon those about him, so that he might see their faces well. Yet he had to be sheltered from any glare, for his eyes had grown weak, and were soon wearied. And a nervous sensitiveness oppressed him. Any sudden sound jarred painfully upon his ear, and agitated him extremely. His voice was now very faint and hollow; his breathing was difficult; and, in speaking, he had often to stop and rest for a few moments. In this way, sometimes, his ideas became disconnected, and he was unable to express all he had designed to say. Late at night his mind wandered a good deal, and he spoke unintelligibly. He was usually composed again in the morning, however.

In this state he lingered some days.

"I grow more and more sad, Duke, do you know, that I've so little to leave behind me, to give away, I mean. I shouldn't like to be forgotten all at once—yet I can leave nothing for those who are dear to me, to remember me by. And they'll need help to remember me. My life has been so brief, and so useless. But—I've spoken to Rachel about it—you must have my sketch-books, Duke, and that easel of mine—the mahogany one I mean—I left in my chambers—my poor dear old chambers! I didn't think when I shut the door on them, to come down here, that I was never to see them again! My paint box, too, Duke, that must be yours. It's only rubbish I'm giving you,

or little better; yet I know you'll care to have it, for my sake. There's a desk standing on the small round table, beside the fire-place—I should like old Vickery to have that. I often plagued him, and laughed at him, but he's a good old fellow really—and has been kind to Rachel. Then, for that queer friend of yours, who came one night and amused us so much—Mole—wasn't his name? I wish you'd see that he has my Shakespeare. It's odd how I cling to being remembered even by people I've scarcely known, and who've forgotten me already, perhaps. But so it is. Doctor Turton must have my watch and chain—you'll mind that. Dear me, I've little else left, I fear. Your uncle, Mr. Orme, wouldn't wear a ring, perhaps—no—but he'll accept kindly my little gold pencil-case, I dare say—and the ring must be for your mother, Duke. God bless her! I know she'll prize it on my account. I wish with all my heart it was a priceless diamond, and not the trumpery thing it really is. And that's all, I think. Or there may be a trifle or two more. I should like something to be found for any friend who'll care to have a souvenir of me. I owe a few pounds, I think. But the furniture in my chambers will fetch enough to pay my debts with. They can be but few, and of small amount. And Rachel—have I nothing left for her? But she'll not forget me, there's no fear of that."

This was the night before he died. The end came almost suddenly at last.

Rachel had been reading to him. A stream of wintry sunshine fell upon his bed, but the curtains were so arranged as to shade his face. He was lying very still, his hand lightly holding mine as I sat beside him. He was in no pain apparently; but his weakness was extreme.

He could scarcely heed, I think, what Rachel read; but her soft, musical tones seemed to soothe him.

I noted that his gaze was slowly turned now upon Rachel, now upon me. He had been silent for some time. All at once, as he watched us by turns, he gave a little start, and smiled brightly. I fancied, but I could not be sure, that he had for himself discovered my heart's secret, and learnt my love for Rachel.

He uttered a faint cry. Rachel closed her book—it was the New Testament—and hurried towards him.

"Good-bye," he murmured, very softly and tenderly. A little pressure of my hand, and then his fingers relaxed their

grasp. His eyes were closed, as though in sleep; there was still a smile upon his parted lips. All was over.

We were speechless; we could do nothing. We stood linked together by the poor dead boy, not yet able to credit that he had really gone from us. It seemed more reasonable to believe that life would yet stir within him, and gleam again from his eyes; that he would speak to us, if but once more, if it was but a word.

Softly my mother entered the room. She knelt down and tenderly rested her hand upon his heart. She rose with tearful eyes, stooped again to kiss him, and then lightly covered his face.

Presently she strewed flowers upon the bed and drew us from the room.

My poor boy-friend!

CHAPTER LXII. A DISCLOSURE.

THE shadow of death had fallen upon the old farm-house. Such deep sadness it had not known before, in all my memory of it. We moved about its darkened rooms as silently as we might, subduing our voices, when there was imperative need to speak, as though we deemed that poor Tony could hear us yet, and that his rest—his everlasting rest!—could be disturbed by stir or discourse of ours. We were numbed and stilled by our great sorrow. There was little attempt on the part of any one to offer consolation to the rest. It would have seemed an assumption of superior fortitude. But we drew together, supporting our grief by sharing it, deriving comfort from the sense of common sympathy and affection. My mother was perhaps the bravest of us. It was not her first experience of affliction. And I noted that more and more she took my poor suffering Rachel to her heart, as though she had been some wounded or half-frozen bird, that could only be cherished back to life by warm tenderness and unremitting solicitude. My uncle was grave and very silent. In a sort of shamefaced way he stole out, now and then, to see to the welfare of his farm. For the demands of the life about us could not be denied or overlooked; although just then in the immediate presence of our great trouble it seemed hard that the world should be moving on so regardlessly, busied as ever, time flying, clocks striking, the birds singing, the sun shining, just as though nothing had happened, and no cruel weight of woe had fallen with crushing violence upon our hearts. This was of course

in the first freshness of our grief. Time would prove, as ever, the true and sure nepenthe; the passing days, dark and cruel as they seemed, would yet leave with us resignation and relief, force to endure, and, at last, almost forgetfulness of our sorrow. Our burthen would grow perceptibly lighter; or would seem to do so, as increase of strength and courage came to us, and we learnt how strenuously nature fights against affliction, and interdicts despair.

My mother found among her treasure two little locketts of old-fashioned device; she gave one to me, to Rachel the other. Each enclosed a light lock of the dead boy's hair.

He was buried in the sunniest corner of Purrington churchyard, away from the shadow of the cold grey tower, and the gloomy ghostly old yew tree, with the sweet, fresh, down breezes blowing freely upon his grave. The funeral was of a simple, almost of a homely sort; but it was not the less touching on that score. The coffin was borne to the church, along the rude road across the down, upon the shoulders of our farm servants, in accordance with their earnest request. They carried a light burthen enough, but they relieved each other at intervals on the way, so that all might join in this tribute of regard for the departed. Rachel, her hand clasped in my mother's, followed the funeral. She was almost overwhelmed with grief, blanched, and very tremulous, but she had nerved herself for the effort, and she found courage to accomplish it. Of the little crowd assembled round the grave, there were none, even to the poorest, that had not contrived somehow to exhibit a scrap of crape or black ribbon in evidence of sympathy and regret. Nor were tears and sobs lacking. When the service concluded, Rachel stood at the brink of the grave and let some few wintry flowers fall upon the coffin-lid—my mother had thoughtfully provided them with that object—all, I noted, drew back a pace or two, as though recognising her superior right to mourn, in that she alone was kindred to the dead. A moment, and then, as her figure seemed to sway and a faint cry broke from her, my mother advanced and gently drew her away. One by one we took our last look at the open grave, and then sadly and slowly wended our way homewards again.

I had written to Sir George, informing him of the loss I had sustained in the death of my friend, and requesting permission to

remain some days longer in the country. I received no reply to my letter.

I had no desire to indulge morbidly in sorrow. I was conscious that occupation would yield comfort; that hard work and the resumption of my ordinary method of life would be best for me. Still my distress was very great; the sense of my bereavement was new and most keen. I had not been disciplined in suffering of this kind. Grief seemed to me, at this time, the rightful tenant of my heart, not to be ousted without grave injustice and ingratitude to Tony's claims upon my love and my remembrance. Any effort to turn my thoughts from him seemed a violence done to our friendship—an outrage of his memory. He was surely entitled to my sorrow now, seeing how completely he had been possessed of my affection in the past. The while I recognised a certain unwisdom in my melancholy, I yet clung to it. The thought of returning to London became odious to me. I had lost heart and appetite for work.

So I lingered some weeks in the country, then gleaming under the fond, yet somewhat desponding smiles of a St. Martin's summer. The garden was a litter of leaves. The woods and coverts about Overbury Hall, as the declining sun-rays touched them, awoke from sombre browns and greys into rich tints of golden bronze, bright orange, and rich purple. The heavy dews of night and morning lent lustre to the meadows. The fields were bare, but their ribbed surfaces wore not as yet winter's look of bleakness and desolation, but were flushed with warm colour and pleasant diversities of light and shade. Something in the pensive tender aspect of the landscape and of the season harmonised with my mood, soothing and relieving me.

Rachel had been anxious to quit the farm-house and journey back to London, her home, as she called it, poor child! She feared lest she should seem to tax our hospitality unduly; her sense of gratitude was so earnest and intense that she almost recoiled from receiving further kindness at our hands. She felt, perhaps, that the debt she had incurred was more than she could repay; there was a guileless kind of pride contained in her deep and touching humility. Something, too, she may have been moved by a desire to depart, so that she might hide her wounds even from our reverent eyes. She longed for the solitude to be secured in a crowded city. Suffering had made her so nervously

sensitive that it pained her to think that she was thought of. But my mother would not hear of her quitting us, and interposed kindly but firmly to prevent it. Indeed it was clear that she had not strength for the journey. She was very weak and ailing, almost worn out with sorrow and suffering.

Let me state honestly that it was not Rachel's presence in the farm-house that kept me there. I loved her with tender devotion; but it was not a time to think of love—still less to speak of it. I saw her but rarely. I was never alone with her. For days she was confined to her room. And it was piteous to look upon her white wasted face; to hear her faint broken tones. Her distress was extreme, and it was the more affecting in that she bore it so meekly and uncomplainingly, striving, indeed, so far as she might, to bear up against and overcome it. But her heart seemed to have perished within her; it was dead and buried in her cousin's grave. My only comfort was in noting my mother's exquisite tenderness for the suffering girl. In this way, it seemed to me, my own love for her found indirect expression.

The days passed, I scarcely know how. A simple cross of white marble, bearing a brief inscription, was erected over Tony's grave. I wandered to and fro, pausing at various points associated with his memory. Here—resting his book upon the gate—he had stood to make a drawing of the farm-house. There he had sketched the old barn, with Overbury Park and the church tower in the distance. And so on. He had never completed the drawings. They were slight and unequal—yet full of pleasant promise and suggestiveness. How like his own life! What had that been but a graceful sketch?

My uncle was growing uneasy, I perceived, by his mute contemplation of me, and his embarrassed way of toying with his snuff-box.

"I've been wanting to speak to you for some days past, Duke," he said at length. "But I've deferred it from time to time. I may as well say it now perhaps as at any other time."

He had met me on the steps leading into the garden.

"We're glad that you should be here, Duke, of course; that I need not tell you; though God knows the cause of your coming has been sad enough to us all. The poor boy's death has been a shock to you, such as you'll feel for a long while,

and you'll need time to get over it. I can well understand that. I wouldn't interfere with your sorrow in any way. But is it well to be idle, do you think? I leave it to your own good sense. You're young, and this should be your working time, you know, if you're ever to do any work in the world. And work's a wholesome and a necessary thing, let me tell you. I wouldn't speak to you rudely or harshly, be sure of that, my boy. But wouldn't it be as well for you to pluck up heart and be busy again? Wouldn't that be the best for your own comfort and well-doing, don't you think?"

I felt that he was right, and that I was fairly chargeable with my old offence of "going lopping about with my hands in my pockets," to adopt Reube's framing of the indictment.

"I'll go back to London to-morrow, uncle," I said.

"No, no, I wouldn't have you be in such a hurry, neither. I only want you to think over it a bit." He was moving away. Then he appeared to hesitate. With an air of sudden resolution, he said—

"There's something more I had to say. Come into the house for a minute or two."

I followed him into the little parlour, looking on to the pathway leading to the farm-yard. He carefully closed the door after me.

"Do you know how much your education as a lawyer and your living in London has cost altogether?"

"No. I have not calculated."

He told me the amount. It took me by surprise; it was much more than I had thought possible.

"I fear I have seemed very extravagant."

"It's not that. The money's gone, and it's no use fretting over it. The law's an expensive profession, and what with premium and stamps, the sum is soon made up. I don't charge you with extravagance. It's a pity, of course, that you didn't know your own mind better. You liked the notion of becoming a lawyer well enough when it was first proposed to you. Well, you were but a lad at the time. And you were anxious to get away from home, and see something of the world. It was natural, no doubt, though it pressed hard upon us—upon your mother, I should say. I'll not speak of myself. And you didn't care for farming. Well, you had

your way. But now it seems you don't care for the law. And you've taken up with another calling."

I said that art would be my profession in the future—that I meant to become a painter.

"Yes, I've understood that. But are you sure you're right this time, Duke? Because you're no longer a boy. There should be an end now of these mistakes—'false starts' as they call them in the racing world. They waste time, and strength, and money. I'm not miserly, as you know; and all I have will be yours one day, most likely, after your poor mother's gone. I'm not thinking of sparing my purse. But it's time that you worked for your own living, and were independent of help from me. A man, and you're a man now, owes that duty to himself."

I answered rather proudly that I was already practically independent, that I secured the means of living by my services in the studio of Sir George Nightingale.

"Yes, I was coming to that," he said. His voice had become hoarse, and he was much agitated, the while he seemed striving to appear calm. I noticed that his fingers were nervously twitching at the lappets of his coat. And now, unconsciously, I think, he had buttoned it up almost to his throat, as though the action was somehow bracing to his resolution.

"There are certain things that have long been kept from you, properly, I think. There was no good telling you of them, while you were not of an age to understand them. But the time has come when you should know them. When, indeed, you must know them. For it seems to me you have a choice to make."

"A choice?"

"Yes. A choice that will greatly affect your future life—and our lives here, too."

"I do not understand."

"You have to choose between your mother and Sir George Nightingale."

"Sir George Nightingale! Again I must say I do not understand."

"*Sir George Nightingale is your father!* Now do you understand?"

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